

# COLLECTIVE

ISSUE 28

THE SARTORIALIST:  
ART *vs.* MONEY

TRADING  
WHEN IT'S  
TABOO

SILICON  
VALLEY  
THE CRISIS  
UNFOLDING

JANE  
FONDA  
*Age doesn't  
scare me*

*Do you know*  
ALESSIA  
CARA?  
TAYLOR SWIFT  
*thinks you should*

GOOD  
VIBES  
ONLY

IT'S TIME TO BREAK FREE  
THINK BIGGER  
BE BOLDER



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*Running a start-up is CHALLENGING, but even more so when your product is one of SOCIETY'S LAST TABOOS. We meet the brains behind three companies that are PUSHING the SOCIAL BOUNDARIES.*

WORDS FIONA MACDONALD

**ANNA GROSMAN & REGINA SIGAL**

*Founders of Aphrodisiac Male Escorts, an escort agency in Melbourne run for women, by women.*

Our friends and family didn't take us seriously at first. When we finally convinced them we weren't joking, they were very concerned and yes, there was judgment. But thankfully, the people who really love us totally accept the business now.

[To my knowledge] no bank lends to businesses that belong to the sex industry, so we used our own savings as capital. We had to be very scrupulous with our money and think outside the box.

We were both working in alternative health and had never worked in the sex industry, so we had no idea what we were getting ourselves into, which is probably a good thing.

We handpick everyone very carefully and right now we only have 10 men on our books. Our clients are so varied, 63 per cent are professional women aged 35-59. They're time-poor and really just looking for convenience. We've had widows, divorcées and even couples who want to spice things up. Some women just want to explore their sexuality further while others are struggling with genuine sexual dysfunction.

It was gradual, but the growth has been constant. We finally broke even in our second year.

To say that getting the word out is 'challenging' is putting it mildly! We've faced so many advertising restrictions set up by the government because we're in the sex industry. Google and social media have their own strict guidelines too, and our promotional budget is limited, so we've had to be creative.

Even with the imposed restrictions, we do still use social media but we have to be discreet – we go under the name of 'Dear Aphrodite', and we only write about sexual information. We now have thousands of subscribers, which is really exciting.

The feedback is what has kept us going. Our clients tell us that the service has helped restore their self-esteem and propel them forward in life. The reality of our business is, it's not all about sex – women want to be desired, to feel desire, to be intimate, and to be witnessed in their sensuality without shame or judgment.

Throughout the whole journey we learned that you can't let people's negative projections overpower you. It's challenging to break away from society's norms, but lots of successful ideas were once considered controversial.

**CHANTELLE HACKETT-SMITH**  
*Boston-based marketing manager at US medical marijuana company BotanaCare, which works with scientists to create marijuana products for medical purposes.*

Working in weed is a constant risk. A lot has changed in the 10 years since marijuana hit the market here in Colorado. But every time you think things have calmed down and the business can grow steadily, a new law or regulation will come in and you have to change everything.

BotanaCare is a family business, it was founded by my mum and my aunt. They were the first females to be hired into the steel industry and they were huge pioneers, but my aunt had fallen during one of her construction jobs and hurt

her back really badly. She eventually started using cannabis provided by a friend before it was legal. She was a sceptic at first, but when she realised how well it worked, she started to grow her own and make her own blends.

As soon as the law in Colorado passed in 2010, she applied for a license with my mum with the goal of helping other people in pain.

*It's challenging to BREAK AWAY from SOCIETY'S NORMS, but lots of SUCCESSFUL ideas were once considered CONTROVERSIAL.*

I came on board straight away, but we didn't tell a lot of the extended family at first. Not everyone was supportive, but once people understand the importance of marijuana as a medicine and see the effect it can

have on people, it changes everything.

It took a year before we had a shop up and running, and we ran that whole year on nothing, it was crazy. We needed the license to get a bank loan, but to get the license we had to be compliant and invest money to get everything set up. It was a risk, because after that the regulatory bodies could still tell us no, but we decided to go with it. We spent six or seven months getting investors so we could pay rent on the warehouse while we were waiting for our license.

Even though it's now legal, there's still this underground gangster mentality in the business. It's pretty rough.

We knew we could do it differently. From day one we were working with researchers to prepare tinctures for different conditions. It's a much finer art than most people know. You need a certain combination of THC and cannabinoid complex for each different ailment.

Over the past four years, we've gone from just a small medical store to having a recreation store too, and we now have around 20 staff. >



There really isn't a typical customer here, so anyone from the age of 21 to 85 walks through our door. Most of it is word of mouth; it's hard with advertising – we can't advertise in newspapers and magazines that sell at airports, and you can't write off marijuana advertising like you can other advertising. Our approach is more native, and we work to educate people about the benefits of cannabinoids and our specific products.

You wouldn't believe how many big dogs are now looking at us, at all of us. In the next five years we're going to see the Walgreens of marijuana start coming up, it's a turning point for the industry.

The biggest challenge still is the legal side of things. You invest so much into creating new products, and they can change the law and you have to redo an entire line because they change the wording of what you can say on it [the packaging].

There are days you want to quit and walk away from cannabis, but we know we're helping people. We've worked with retired military people, the elderly. We just worked with a little girl who's two and she was having uncontrollable seizures. The doctors couldn't do anything, but after taking cannabis for 10 days she stopped having seizures and started responding to her parents. It's days like this that make it worth it.

#### MELISSA GRANT

*Vice president of health services with not-for-profit Carafem in Maryland, working to create abortion clinics that are more like living rooms than doctor's offices.*

Our current tagline on our billboards is, "Abortion, yeah we do that". There are plenty of people who feel it's inappropriate, but I have to remind myself we're not speaking to those people. If you don't need abortion care then our message isn't intended for you. But for those who do, they find it freeing to have someone willing to speak about it openly. We just want to get people talking frankly about abortion like any other medical procedure.

Carafem was created in 2014 by a group of us who had all worked in healthcare for a long time. We realised that instead of getting easier, it's now actually harder than it was 20 years ago for women to have an abortion. Since 1991, 75 per cent of abortion centres that were previously open had shut down in the US.

But we didn't just want to open more clinics, we wanted to change the way the care was provided altogether. One big thing was the physical environment. So we put in cosy couches, lots of natural light.

There's no antiseptic smell or medical equipment on site. We also chose to set up in a multi-use medical centre, which means that we don't attract many protesters.

Through our previous work, we were lucky enough to know investors in the healthcare field that we could get to support us, and they are all as passionate about the cause as we are. We're non-profit, but we keep our staff and facility small so that we can pass the savings on to our patients. The cost of the abortion medication at Carafem is US\$400, which is [around] US\$100 to US\$150 less than other clinics.

It's been tough because each state is different in terms of restrictions. We chose to build our first centre here in Maryland because of how close it is to Virginia, which has a lot of laws in place. Over there, women need to have at least two visits to a doctor before they can be

given abortion medication. But now they can just get the train to us instead and get it all done in an hour.

We only offer abortion drugs, rather than surgery, as this allows us to provide a better service. There's no early cut-off, anyone can see us from the time they have a positive pregnancy test up until 10 weeks. After that, we have like-minded doctors we can refer women to for surgical abortion, and we still work

with the patients through the process.

We did a lot of research about our clients before we started and all our business decisions are made with those women in mind. We know how tough it can be to have an abortion – not necessarily because of

anything emotional, but because women have to miss work, they feel unwell, and they often don't want to tell their boss about it. The majority of our clients are between 18 and 29, [often] they don't have access to a car and they don't want to go away overnight because they don't want to explain their absence to family or housemates. Because of that, we're right next to public transport, we offer appointments in the evening and on weekends, and we answer our phone 24/7 so people don't have to sneak off to the office bathroom to book their appointment.

We've been very selective with our advertising. We know 80 per cent of our clients reach us using their smartphones, so we focus on a lot of social media and display advertising. Frustratingly, we've had a lot of publishers turn us down, or say yes and then change their mind. It's crazy, one in three women in the US has had an abortion, and yet so many people still aren't willing to acknowledge that it happens. ■

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